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IT'S TIME FOR A MOON-SHOT IN EDUCATION.

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AMONG A NUMBER OF SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHING THE DISADVANTAGED ARE (1) THE DIALECT GAME, IN WHICH THE CHILD'S SLANG, "HIP" TALK OR MISPRONUNCIATION IS USED AS THE BASIS FOR LEARNING MORE CONVENTIONAL TERMINOLOGY OR FOR CONVEYING MEANINGS TO HIM WHICH HE OTHERWISE WOULD NOT GRASP, (2) THE HELPER PRINCIPLE (6TH-GRADERS CAN BE HELPFUL IN TEACHING YOUNGER CHILDREN AND CAN BENEFIT THEMSELVES FROM PLAYING THE TEACHER ROLE), (3) ROLE PLAYING (ACTING OUT WORDS OR HISTORICAL EVENTS OR ECONOMIC TRANSACTIONS). (LC)

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IT'S TIME FOR A MOON-SHOT IN EDUCATION

A proposal for a revolution in the education of the disadvantaged child....and all children

by

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In the past several years, enormous interest has been expressed concerning the education of the disadvantaged, inner-city child. Programs developing in various cities throughout the United States have met with varying success:

.....Negro Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Sam Sheppard has quickly brought youngsters up to grade level in St. Louis with special motivational appeals to parents and youngsters and a new "listening" approach to teachers.

.....Special teacher preparation developed at Hunter College in New York appears to aid teachers in "slum" areas.

.....New approaches have overcome illiteracy in adults with surprising speed in the Army.

.....Programmed learning has had some marked effects on drop-outs in New York and prisoners in Alabama whose level of intellectu l functioning was quite low.*

.....Montessorian techniques have achieved results in Los Angeles and Mount Vernon; imaginative hip lessons combined with role playing have proved exciting in Syracuse; team teaching has worked in Pittsburgh; new readers have improved reading levels of educationally deprived youngsters in Detroit.

Despite these encouraging reports, large-scale improvements in the learning of disadvantaged youngsters have not been achieved for at least three reasons:

1.) The efforts have been piecemeal and unintegrated. One technique is used here and another there but there has been no theoretically directed integrated approach.

2.) The major emphasis has been on deficits and "compensatory" efforts directed toward overcoming them; there has been little understanding of how to use the strengths

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* Non-graded classes, multiple periods, use of imaginative game-like techniques, to name just a few other approaches, have lso shown considerable potenti l.

and positives of disadvantaged youngsters, if, indeed, it is recognized that these strengths exist at all.

3.) There has been no concerted effort to meet the felt needs of the teachers - for lower student-teacher ratios, techniques that work, a voice in decisions that affect them, etc. The classroom teacher has not typically been perceived as the strategic change agent for massive improvement in the learning of the poor.* (Instead, much stress has been placed on parents, pre-schools, teaching machines, psychological guidance and special services.)

The present period combines strong demands of the Civil Rights movement for quality integrated education, with tremendous financial support from the Federal Government plus a "Great Education President". In this climate, it would seem that a revolutionary breakthrough in the education of the poor can now be planned, as a first step in revitalizing our public schools and winning back the middle classes who have fled to the private schools. It is truly time to aim for the moon and not accept improvement up to grade level.

What, then, should be the ingredients for our projected revolution in education? Should we combine all the various features that have worked in a kind of potpourri or should we rather selectively choose approaches based on analysis which offers an explanation in a coherent fasion of why they have worked. The latter is not only theoretically more meaningful, but probably less expensive.**

We would now like to propose the outlines of such a program.**

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*The current concern for a national Teacher Corps and special teacher training programs sponsored by NDEA, etc. is in the right direction.

**The program could be placed within the framework of the developing educational parks or educational complexes which would allow for economic utilization of a great variety of new techniques and facilities (educational TV, programmed learning, team teaching, etc.) under one roof, but is not necessary for our moonshot.

The New Manpower

Perhaps the major complaint in the schools today is the large classes that each teacher must manage. The ratio of students to teachers is frequently greater than thirty to one. New manpower to assist the badly overworked teacher is the paramount need of the day. Where can it be found?

The utilization of large numbers of people drawn from the ranks of the poor themselves, so called nonprofessionals, to serve as teacher assistants, teacher aides, parent-teacher coordinators and the like may be the answer.

Currently in the classroom there is but one designated role -- teacher. Incorporated in that role are a great number of diverse functions -- the teacher is an educator, but he is also a clerk, a custodian, an operator of audio-visual equipment, and an audio-version of a printed book. In many slum schools the impression gained in that the teacher is part lion tamer and part warehouseman. The latter roles must be eliminated and many of the others can be assumed by less qualified personnel.

The use of this new kind of nonprofessional manpower would serve a number of positive functions:

1) it would free teachers from the many nonprofessional tasks they now perform, e.g. taking attendance, helping children on with their boots, tying children's shoelaces, running moving picture projectors, taking youngsters on trips, etc. The new Teacher Aides would take over many of these tasks freeing teachers for their basic professional assignment, teaching and teaching creatively.

2) The nonprofessionals (especially males), drawn from the ranks of the poor, would serve as excellent role models for the disadvantaged youngsters in the schools; the youngsters would see that it is possible that people like themselves drawn from their own neighborhood can "make it" in the system.

3) Communication between the training nonprofessional and the disadvantaged youngster would probably be good because the nonprofessional drawn from the neighborhood speaks the language of the poor and understands his peers. Many of the advantages of peer learning or learning from people at the same level would be utilized.

4) The atmosphere of the school will be quite different and many of the management problems that are anticipated in the urban, newly integrated schools, might be dissipated.*

*The tremendous shortage of school personnel, predicted for the next decade, might be drastically reduced through the employment of one million nonprofessionals in the schools. For a more detailed description of how nonprofessionals could serve the school, see New Careers for the Poor, by Arthur Pearl and Frank Riessman, Free Press, 1965, Chapter 4. It is axiomatic that teachers would have to be trained and assisted in utilizing the nonprofessionals.

It goes without saying that the use of aides would not be imposed upon teachers. In fact, teachers' associations and unions should participate in the entire planning for the use of nonprofessionals, and guarantees should be introduced to insure that no aide infringes on professional domain by engaging in actual teacher or other professional functions.

Probably the best way to introduce nonprofessionals into the system, is to ask teachers to volunteer to accept an aide to assist them. The teachers who select themselves can then define the tasks on which they would like nonprofessional assistance. (They may also receive consultation on this from the program planners.) It is quite likely that if the aides are really helpful, the program will contagiously spread and other teachers will request nonprofessional assistants for their classrooms. In this way the idea can be institutionalized with the full cooperation of the professional staff and the new professional-nonprofessional team can be built on a solid foundation.

Teachers not only need new manpower to assist them in the classroom; they need a new approach as well.

Too often nowadays, teachers are being asked to act like psychologists (understand the underlying emotional conflicts of the child); like sociologists (appreciate the environment and culture of the deprived); like prison guards (keep order and prevent violence); like substitute parents (love the children); like ministers (impart the right values).

It is time that teachers concentrated on teaching and develop and apply that art and science to the utmost. It is toward this objective that the following techniques are directed.

But before turning to the techniques themselves, a word about basic classroom strategy.

Basic Classroom Strategy

Everything the teacher says and does in the classroom should be related to learning. He should repeat over and over and over again: "I am here to teach and you are here to learn". This should be expressed in the teacher's every action and should be related to every rule and value.

Thus all rules related to punctuality, aggression, etc. should be strictly oriented toward their usefulness in relation to learning. (e.g. "We can't conduct a class if children fight, come late, walk around, etc.") This is not a minister informing children about values -- that fighting is "bad". It is rather a teacher conducting a class.

Techniques and Goals

The emphasis on teaching technology is very important in the entire effort. Teachers cannot be expected to become sociologists or psychologists and acquire an intensive understanding of the psychology vs culture of the poor. Rather, they must come to simply understand something about how the techniques they are utilizing are related to the style and strength of the poor but the emphasis must be on the techniques themselves. As teachers successfully utilize these techniques, their confidence will improve and their motivation will be enhanced. Our accent, therefore, is on giving the teachers what they want, namely know-how.

The techniques to be employed should be based fundamentally on the goals one is striving for with the disadvantaged. I do not have the goal of simply producing a carbon copy of the middle-class child.* To aim for this middle-class replica is not only inappropriate in principle but actually not easily achievable in practice. The disadvantaged child will probably resist this objective and to the extent that he acquieses, will become a poor edition of the middle-class youngster -- a very faded carbon copy. My objective, therefore, is to build on the strengths of the inner-city child, not to deny them or suppress them, but rather to utilize them as the key to developing, for example, language and interest in language. But my concern for building on the strengths of the disadvantaged child is not simply so that he can be more efficiently brought into the mainstream of American life; rather I want also to have him bring into this mainstream some of his characteristics: his style, his pep, his vitality, his demand that the school not be boring and dull, his rich feeling for metaphor and colorful language.

In another area one group of disadvantaged people in America, the Negro people, have made an enormous contribution to the mainstream of American life through their articulate non-compromising demands for integration "now". These people have brought a new morality to American life as a whole. To the extent that we are beginning to hold our heads up high and feel again like democratic, ethical, human Americans. This is what one minority disadvantaged group has given us in another area of life. In education, likewise, the mainstream of American life can profit from what the various groups among the poor can bring to the school system both in terms of the demands made upon the system that it be peppier, livelier, more vital, more down-to-earth, more real and in the style and interests brought to the school. This style will enable the school to become far less bookish and will enable it to utilize a great variety of styles -- an action style, a physical style, a visual style -- far more than the over-utilized and over-emphasized reading-lecture styles traditionally in vogue.

The techniques that I will discuss are uniquely related to these goals and to the belief that there is a positive style in the disadvantaged which can be utilized to the great benefit of all classes. But if this goal is not accepted, the techniques can still be utilized with varying degree of effectiveness. Thus the reader can go on even if he does not accept the overall objective.

The Dialect Game

The best way to illustrate the relationship of the teaching technology I am advocating and the goals being put forth is to take a look at one very simple technique which I learned from a teacher who evolved it out of her own practice. I call it the dialect game.

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*The real question for those who want to "middle classize" the disadvantaged child, related to which middle class and which middle class goals and values -- the professional upper middle class; the anti-intellectual lower middle class; the new hip class that has adopted much of the speech and some of the manners of various disadvantaged subcultures; the progressive student left, etc. Furthermore, isn't it possible that the disadvantaged youngster will selectively choose those middle class characteristics that at least articulate with some of his own traditions and feelings?

One day a youngster said to this teacher, "Do you hear that boid outside the window?" and the teacher responded, "That's not a boid, it's a bird." Following the old joke, the youngster replied "He choips just like a boid." It is fairly clear that this way of teaching the youngster the standard pronunciations of words might not only be unsuccessful in its avowed objective, but might, in addition, produce cognitive confusion about the object itself.

The teacher thereupon decided that it would be very easy to teach youngsters the standard pronunciations if they would not be required to reject their own dialects, their slang, their hip language. So she decided to play a game taking any word at random and asking the youngsters how it would be said in their language and how it should be said in the standard language. The youngsters, as well as the teacher, found this game very exciting and both learned a great deal. They now were learning the new words as they might learn a foreign language and they were discovering that their own language was perfectly acceptable and merely had to be used in the proper circumstances -- in their discussions with friends, family, and on the street. While for formal purposes, another language was appropriate and was being taught in the school. But something else happened in this situation. The youngsters began to become very much interested in language as such; e.g. in discussing the hip word "cool", it was decided that words like "calm" and"collected" and the advanced word "nonchalant" were fairly appropriate synonyms. However, it was also noted that these words were not perfect equivalents of "cool" and thus, indirectly, language nuances were taught. Youngsters began to understand why we use certain foreign words that are not completely translatable, i.e. "coup d'etat", because they have special connotations or overtones in their original language which our language could not duplicate.

They learned something else, too. They learned that their own language was not something negative to be denied or suppressed, but that actually many of their words had nuances and meanings which had not been fully acquired in the standard language and that therefore the slang and hip words had been adopted by the larger culture. So today "jazz", "cooling it", "copping out" and many, many other rich colorful words are in accepted usage in the English language in conversation, etc. This is building on their positives, not rejecting them and bringing their strengths and interests into the mainstream of our life.

There are a number of other simple adaptations of this dialect game. Recently in tutoring a disadvantaged high school student in English, I employed a hiptionary in a completely systematic and formal fashion. The first and rather immediate result was that the student learned a great many new English word definitions for the "hip" words with which she was long familiar.

Hip Word*	Definition
"bug"	to disturb, bother annoy
"cop out"	to avoid conflict by running away, not considered admirable or honorably accepted

*The words in this list were taken from a hiptionary entitled, "The Other Language" developed by Anthony Romeo at Mobilization for Youth January 1962, unpublished.

Hip Word	Definition
"cool it"	to be quiet, peaceful, tranquil
"far out"	not comprehendable
"weak"	inadequate, inappropriate

Words such as "tranquil", "inappropriate", etc. were not known by this youngster, but through use of the hip "word game" she quickly became familiar with them and derived great pleasure from a new found use of various "big" words.

Another interesting illustration is furnished by the problem of teaching English to Puerto Rican and Mexican children entering our school systems in New York, California and other parts of the country. The typical tendency is to force these youngsters not to speak any of their mother tongue, namely Spanish, but rather to insist that they speak only English, on the supposition that this would be the best way of their acquiring the English language. While this may be a perfectly acceptable way of teaching language to an adult in certain contexts, when it is associated in the child with rejection of his minority culture (something he experiences quite frequently).he is not likely to be an apt pupil in the new language. Furthermore, he is constantly in the inferior position of having to acquire this language while the remainder of the youngsters in the class already know it. The dialect game can be utilized beautifully to reverse the whole procedure. Instead of emphasizing the need for the Spanish children to learn English, the situation can be reversed for part of the day; and the Spanish children can be instructed to teach Spanish to the American children. In other words, both languages become important in the class. The English children have an opportunity to learn a foreign language, presumably a positive benefit when that language is French or Latin, and the Spanish children can be placed temporarily in the position of some superiority through helping others. In addition, of course, in order for the Puerto Rican youngster to teach Spanish to the American child, the Puerto Rican child must be able to communicate to some extent in English and in the very process of teaching the foreign language, he must acquire more English in order to communicate (unless he arbitrarily insists that only Spanish be spoken when he is instructing!).

Thus the dialect game which can be utilized by anyone as a gimmick or an auxiliary technique in teaching, takes on considerable depth when seen in the context of two cultures, two languages functioning alongside of each other, both being respected, both affecting each other with no condescension toward the minority culture.

The Helper Principle: Learning Through Teaching

Another fascinating approach to the expansion of classroom learning is to be found in Lippitt's intriguing "peer learning" experiments which demonstrate that youngsters in the sixth grade can be helpful in teaching younger children -- and can benefit themselves from playing the teacher role.

At the recent White House Conference on Education, Professor Jerrold Zaccharias proposed that we have students teacher as a major avenue for improving their own learning and Montessorians have long utilized children to help other children learn in the classroom.

Mobilization For Youth has used homework helpers with a fair amount of success, in that the recipients of the help showed some measurable academic improvement. It may be that even more significant changes are taking place in the high school youngsters who are being used as tutors. Not only is it possible that their school performance is improving, but as a result of their new role these youngsters may begin to perceive the possibility of embarking on a teaching career.

A connected issue worthy of mention is that in the new situations in the schools, where (hopefully) integration will be taking place, youngsters coming from segregated backgrounds will need help in catching up, in terms of reading skills and the like. It is generally argued that the white middle-class children who do not need this extra assistance will suffer. Their parents want these youngsters to be in a class with advanced pupils and not to be "held back" by youngsters who are behind.

However, in terms of the helper principle, it may very well be that the more advanced youngsters can benefit in new ways from playing a teaching role. Not all fast, bright youngster like to be in a class with similar children. We have been led to believe that if one is fast and bright he will want to be with others who are fast and bright and this will act as a stimulus to his growth. It does for some people, but for others it most certainly does not. Some people find they do better in a group in which there is a great range of ability, in which they can stand out more, and, finally -- and this is the point of the helper principle -- in situations in which they can help other youngsters in the classroom. In other words, some children develop intellectually not by being challenged by someone ahead of them, but by helping somebody behind them, by being put into the tutor-helper role.

As any teacher can report, there is nothing like learning through teaching. By having to explain something to someone else, one's attention is focused more sharply.

The helper principle may be especially valuable for disadvantaged youngsters because in their informal out-of-school learning, they tend to learn much more from each other, from their brothers and sisters, than from their parents reading them a book or answering their questions. They are essentially peer learners by style and experience.

Capturing the Action Style Through Role Playing

Role playing can be used, as Professor Senesch observes, to teach arithmetic and economics (by "playing" store); to teach history by acting out, for example, George Washington signing the Constitution; even language can be taught by acting out words (in fact, the game "In the Manner of the Adverb" consists of "doing the adverb -- e.g. walking quickly, writing quickly, etc.

Role playing has long been popular with disadvantaged youngsters. This appears to be so because the technique is very congenial with the low income person's style: physical (action oriented, doing rather than only talking); down to earth, concrete, problem directed; externally oriented rather than introspective; group centered; game-like rather than test oriented; easy, informal in tempo. In essence, disadvantaged youngsters tend to work out mental problems best when they can do things physically (whether it be through role playing, dance, taking a trip, etc.).

A Route to Verbalization. In role playing sessions it has been observed that the verbal performance of deprived children is markedly improved in the discussion period following the session. When talking about some action they have seen, deprived children are apparently able to verbalize much more fully. Typically, they do not verbalize well in response to words alone. They express themselves more readily when reacting to things they can see and do. Words as stimuli are not sufficient for them as a rule. Ask a youngster who comes from a disadvantaged background what he doesn't like about school or the teacher and you will get an abbreviated, inarticulate reply. But have a group of these youngsters act out a school scene in which someone plays the teacher and you will discover a stream of verbal consciousness that is almost impossible to shut off.*

We cannot detail here all the various techniques and approaches that might be utilized in our moon directed program of education for the poor. Scope magazine presents a great variety of games and approaches suited to the "action" style of these youngsters.

Any of the following might be important "extras" to be added depending upon the style, interests and abilities of the teachers involved in the program:

1. The "organics" approach of Sylvia Ashton Warner (The Teacher). This should be especially valuable in utilizing the interests and strengths of the youngsters, and guard against their being "acted upon" (the current trend in many of the "compensatory" programs designed for disadvantaged who are supposedly "deficit" ridden .

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* Role playing has been utilized to some extent in the schools but there has been little awareness of its special potential for connecting with the style of the disadvantaged and as a crucial avenue for developing their verbalization. Its use may serve a very different function for middle class children; it may force them to be more concrete and reduce some of their over intellectualization tendencies. Teachers should be aware of these different potential uses of role playing.

2. A "modified" curriculum, developed by Gail Donovan in Boston, which stimulated vastly increased interest in literature among poor youngsters.

3. Use of the dance as a method for developing concepts and language as developed by Claire Schmais in Washington, D.C.

4. Jensen's techniques for developing "verbal mediators" (silent speech, so to speak) in problem solving.

Blueprint for a Revolution

Piecemeal approaches to the improvement of the education of the poor have provided many exciting experiments and some definite gains in learning. The time is now ripe for an all out attack, integrating our best knowledge in an effort to produce truly large, enduring improvements in the learning of disadvantaged youngsters at all ages. This requires leadership, new techniques and new manpower.

In order to fly to the moon in educating the poor the following are proposed:

1. Nonprofessional teacher aides, recruited from among the poor themselves, to assist teachers so that they can more fully play their professional roles as teachers. This auxiliary manpower can also provide excellent male role models for educationally deprived youngsters.

2. Young teachers who would be trained in the use of teaching techniques (e.g. the dialect game, the helper principle, role playing, etc.) attuned to the styles and strengths of disadvantaged children. The positives must come first and around these positives we can begin to correct the limitations of the child in relation to reading, school know-how, language skills, etc. If the teacher expects more, he will get more if his positive expectations are built on an understanding of why he is using the exciting new technologies.

3. In-service Teacher Institutes using trained Master Teachers to introduce knowledge and techniques related to immediate classroom problems. An attempt should be made to have teachers use techniques that fit not only the style of the children, but their own style and interests as well (style match).

   Full participation of the trainees should be intensively solicited with regard to encouraging them to formulate their needs, how they see their problems, and their suggestions for meeting these problems. Hence, small teacher meetings should be organized to discuss (and role play practice) ways of meeting classroom difficulties. In this context, the trainers would offer for discussion, techniques that have evolved elsewhere. A group or team approach would be a central feature in the training with a strong emphasis on building esprit de corps.

4. New urban readers and other appropriate curriculum materials and especially the new teaching machines (programmed learning). Readers that have been developed in Detroit by Follett Publishing Company and in New York by Bank Street College, and published

by MacMillan should be included in the program. These readers incorporate disadvantaged people and themes in a more representative view of urban life and the research in Detroit indicates that all youngsters read better with these readers, not only disadvantaged children -- that they laugh more and feel that the stories are more interesting and lively.

The new literacy techniques, Words in Color published by the Encyclopedia Britannica and Woolman's Progressive Accelerated Technique are achieving dramatic rapid results with non-literate adults and we would suggest that they become integrated in the proposed program.

5. New administrative arrangements such as team teaching, multiple periods, nongraded classes, educational parks, intensive extra school programs (during summers, weekends, and after school hours). These extra school programs can introduce specialists into the school, such as artists, dancers, musicians to develop the artistic talents of the youngsters. Tutors could be brought in here also and special uses of programmed learning and educational TV could be planned.

6. Special parent-teacher groups, led by nonprofessional parent education coordinators, directed toward developing full, genuine two-way communication between the parent and the schools. Parents could be involved as important supportive elements in the program. They should be used to back up the role of a school that really wants to teach the child and they should be listened to attentively by the school and by the nonprofessional parent-education coordinators who mediate between them and the school. They should not be asked, however, to read to the children or to do homework with them or any tasks which the find essentially uncongenial. They can function to check-up on the homework as Sheppard has had them do in St. Louis and to work in a unified way with the school encouraging the child to learn, to attend punctually, to do his homework, etc.

7. Finally, what is needed for our monshot is an astronaut -- an exciting committed educational leader. Fortunately there are a number of such qualified individuals potentially available: George Brain, who did such a fine job in the Baltimore school system; Daniel Schreiber, who charismatic leadership first brought Higher Horizons to national attention; Samuel Sheppard whose experiment in St. Louis has been perhaps the most outstanding in the United States -- just to name a few possibilities. This type of leader will "expect more" and he will get more. He must be flexible enough to permit and encourage the needed innovative classroom arrangements.

CONCLUSION

Large-scale improvements in the learning of disadvantaged youngsters have not been achieved in the past because most of theprevious programs were unrelated to each other, accented deficits and failed to focus on the teacher as the key to the revolution in education.

The moonshot we have presented is directed toward meeting the felt needs of teachers. Teachers want smaller classes, new materials and methods to aid them in teaching, a voice in decision that affect them, a reduction of discipline problems, a greater feeling of importance or respect.

The program is intended to meet these objectives to varying degrees. It attempts to provide non-professional assistance for teachers in the classroom; it introduces new methods for teaching the children; it encourages the participation of teachers with regard to the use of the new manpower and the new techniques; it does not impose new methods on the teachers but rather stimulates them to select and develop methods appropriate to their styles and interests; it leaves entirely to the individual teachers the decision as to whether they will select non-professional Aides to be used in their own classes; it endeavors, through the use of added personnel, to meet the discipline problems within the classroom, in the lunch period and in the corridors; it brings new importance to the teacher by centering on him as the significant change agent. And it also places somebody below the teacher in the school hierarchy.

The program endeavors to help the student by building on his positives and expanding them. It aims to do this by assisting the teachers to develop and utilize approaches especially suited to the styles and strengths of disadvantaged youngsters but applicable to all youngsters. The program, in essence, endeavors to overcome the difficulties in the student's learning by concentrating on his positives. It hopes to build bridges from his strengths that will enable him to overcome deficits.

The approach is directed toward convincing the disadvantaged student that he can learn and become educated without necessarily becoming a middle class stereotype - that he can retain his own identity. The keynote is the following quotations from Ralph Ellison:

"If you can show me how I can cling to that which is real to me, while teaching me a way into a larger society, then I will drop my defenses and my hostility, but I will sing your praises and I will help you to make the desert bear fruit."